



PREVENTING AND DEALING WITH PHARMACY ROBBERIES

SDPD Crime Prevention

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This paper provides tips for pharmacies on how to prevent robberies, what to do if a robbery occurs, and what to do after a robbery to help arrest the robber. Most of them apply to both in-store and stand-alone pharmacies. Some apply to one kind, e.g., keeping the front door locked and buzzing in customers would not be practical for in-store pharmacies. Decisions regarding specific measures would be based on a security assessment that takes into account vulnerabilities, likelihood of robberies, costs of prevention measures, possible losses, risks to employees, effects on customers, etc. General tips for preventing retail store burglaries and robberies are in a paper entitled Burglary and Robber Prevention for Retail Stores that can be opened on the Prevention Tips page of the SDPD website at www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/tips. They are not repeated here.

HOW TO PREVENT ROBBERIES

The following tips can help prevent robberies and enhance the safety of your employees. The SDPD Community Relations Officer (CRO) in your area will be glad to assist you in this with a free business security survey. The CRO will identify vulnerabilities and suggest ways to eliminate them. SDPD division addresses and phone numbers are listed at the end of this paper.

Store Design

- Locate the cash register where it is visible from the outside of the store, but far enough away from the window so as not to provoke a quick window-smash and grab.
- Protect cashier with a bullet-resistant glass, plastic, or laminate enclosure or window. And install a secure money pass-through slot or tray. This also applies to drive-through window cashier locations.
- Build counters high enough so a robber cannot jump over them to get into the drug storage and dispensing area.
- Install counter shutters with a fast-closing option to prevent a robber from jumping over the counter.
- Provide two-way visibility in areas open to the public. Keep windows and counters clear. Don't allow them to be cluttered with signs, displays, plants, etc. For stores that sell alcoholic beverages the California Business and Professions Code Sec. 25612.5(c)(7) states that "No more than 33 percent of the square footage of the windows and clear doors of an off-sale premises shall bear advertising or signs of any sort, and all advertising and signage shall be placed and maintained in a manner that ensures that law enforcement personnel have a clear and unobstructed view of the interior of the premises, including the area in which the cash registers are maintained, from the exterior public sidewalk or entrance to the premises."
- Install convex mirrors to enable employees to see people in areas that might be blocked by display shelves, walls, or other obstructions.

- Provide good lighting in the pharmacy area.
- Because lights and other security systems work on electrical power you must take measures to prevent disruption of external power or provide internal backup power. At a minimum, external circuit breakers should be installed in a sturdy box that is locked with a shielded padlock.
- Alarm systems that use phone lines should also have a backup cell-phone feature in case the line is cut.
- Install 180-degree peepholes in all solid doors so employees can identify persons at a door before opening it. Peepholes also enable employees to check that no one is hiding near the door before it's opened, e.g., to take out trash. Or install cameras outside the doors with monitors on the inside that employees can look at to make sure it is safe to open the door.
- Install silent alarm buttons at cashier and other vulnerable employee positions. The alarm would alert your security company to call the SDPD to report a robbery in progress.
- Install two sets of exit doors and a remote locking system to enable an escaping robber to be trapped between them.
- Place colored height marks at all exit doors to help estimate the robbers' height. While this won't help prevent a robbery, it will enable employees to better describe a robber.
- Locate the pharmacy in the back of a store so robbers have to go down several aisles to exit the store.
- Store target drugs in excess of the day's prescription fill in a safe or storage locker with a time-delay lock. Employees would not be able to open the safe or locker during the day.

Store Operation

- Put excess cash in a time-lock drop safe. Keep the safe locked when access is not required.
- Never open your store for anyone after you have closed.
- Beware of a caller who says that your store has been broken into and asks you to come and secure it. Get the caller's identity and call back to confirm that it was from a SDPD officer or other trusted person before going to your store. The same applies to a caller who says he or she is from your alarm company.
- Keep all exterior doors locked during store hours except those used by the public. These doors should be monitored by store employees or security personnel. Emergency exits should be alarmed and designated for emergency use only. Employees should close and report any exterior door found open in areas not accessible to the public.
- Keep the front door locked and have customers buzz to be observed and greeted before being admitted.
- Limit quantities of target drugs in the store. Three possibilities are: (1) not stocking the drug, (2) stocking just enough to fill prescriptions to be picked up that day, and (3) stocking more than enough to fill the day's prescriptions but keeping the excess in a safe or storage locker with a time-delay lock.
- Put a tracking device in one of the target drug bottles that would be given to a robber. This would enable the police to locate and arrest the robber.
- Mark all target drug bottles so that a person found with one of these bottle in his or her possession could be investigated for the robbery.
- Install a device that sprays a mist on the robber as he or she leaves the pharmacy. The mist, which the robber cannot notice, contains a plant DNA that is visible only under a special light. Suspects seen with this DNA are thus linked to the robbery and easier to convict.
- Wipe down counters and doors to the drug storage area to keep them clean for fingerprints that might be left by a robber.

Personnel Policies

- Train employees in the operation of security systems, procedures, and measures, i.e., cameras, alarms, safes, etc., and to recognize persons who might be casing the store for a robbery.
- Allow only authorized personnel behind the counter. Check others who say they need access for valid identification. And then call the issuer to verify the information.
- Designate two employees to open and close the store. Those opening the store should be trained to call **911** if they see anything suspicious, e.g., a vehicle parked in the lot near the door, and not to enter until the SDPD arrives. Those closing the store should make sure it is safe to leave, either by looking out a peephole or looking at the imagery of a camera covering the area outside the door. If they notice anything suspicious they should

call **911** and remain in the safety of the store until an officer arrives. These employees should park as close as possible to the door.

- Have at least two employees working at high-risk times.
- Be especially alert at opening and closing times when the store is not crowded.
- Request that customers remove hats, hood, and sunglasses. If they refuse, alert store security and the pharmacy, and call **911**.
- Hire your own security personnel or contract with a security company for security services. In the former case you must register with and obtain a Proprietary Private Security Employer (PSE) license from the California Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (CBSIS). You can then hire and train persons who have registered with the CBSIS and have valid Proprietary Private Security Officer (PSO) licenses. A person must pass a criminal history check by the California Department of Justice and the FBI to obtain this license. The PSE must obtain authorization from the CBSIS to provide the initial 16-hour and continuing-education PSO training. To contract for private security services you would deal with a Private Patrol Operator (PPO), who must register with the CBSIS and obtain a PPO license, for which there are numerous requirements. The PPO would provide Security Guards for the security services. Security Guards must also be licensed by the CBSIS. They will need to pass a criminal history check and complete a 40-hour training course.

Cameras

- Install visible cameras to record people entering and leaving the store. Cameras should also cover the pharmacy counters and any other areas where robbers might go. They should be mounted where they cannot be covered or tampered with. Dummy cameras should not be used because most criminals can tell the difference between real cameras and dummies.
- Hide and secure the recorders. Consider installing a dummy recorder that is visible.
- Install cameras to record people and vehicles outside your store and in your parking lot. These cameras should have video analytics or intelligent video software that will alert you or your security company when something suspicious occurs, e.g., a person is loitering in front of your store, so the monitors don't have to be watched all the time. An Internet link to transmit the imagery would have to be provided to enable your security company to also monitor the cameras in these situations.
- Keep the area outside the store and the parking lot well lighted at night when the store is open to improve camera imagery.

Signs

- If cameras are not monitored all the time, signs regarding cameras should simply state that "cameras are on the premises" or "surveillance is in progress." Don't use words like "security," "protection," or "monitoring" because they can give people a false sense of security by expecting timely help if they are threatened or attacked, or that they or their property are somehow being protected by the cameras.
- Employees do not have access to any safes.
- Name of the alarm company.
- Camera imagery is recorded off site. This should deter a robber from looking for and retrieving or destroying the recorder.
- Hats, hoods, and sunglasses should be removed when entering your store. This will make robbers more recognizable in your camera imagery.
- Certain drugs are not stocked, or the amount stocked is just sufficient to fill prescriptions being picked up today.

WHAT TO DO IF A ROBBERY OCCURS

Every robbery is different. You will need to assess yourself, the robber, and the situation to determine what you should do. Here are some general tips to use in training your employees:

- Act calmly. Do exactly what the robber says, no more or no less. Keep your movements short and smooth to avoid startling the robber. Keep away from the robber and limit eye contact. Give the robber exactly what he or she asks for. Don't offer any more.

- Don't stall. The quicker the robber leaves the less chance of violence.
- Do not resist or try to be a hero. Cooperate for your own safety and the safety of others. Robbers usually are excited and easily provoked. Tell the robber about any movements you plan to make.
- Activate the silent alarm if it can be done safely without alerting the robber.
- Observe carefully. Study the robber's face and clothing and note any distinguishing features including height, weight, race, hair, eyes, nose, scars, tattoos, etc. Be aware that robber might be using physical disguises, e.g., a wig, mustache, etc. Also try to remember as much as possible about the robber's voice, language, accent, mannerisms, etc. If there is more than one robber, get a good description of one before going to the others. You can get confused if you try to remember too much.
- Get a good description of any weapon used.
- Remember what was taken, where it was put, and how it was carried.
- Watch carefully for any things the robber may touch. Don't disturb or touch them. They may contain fingerprints that can help identify the robber.
- Don't block the robber's escape route in the store.
- The camera system should also be able to provide real-time streaming video to SDPD patrol cars that have been dispatched to answer the alarm call. This will enable officers en route to the scene to make better, more informed tactical decisions and determine whether additional officers and emergency services are required. In this new program, called Operation Secure San Diego, the SDPD would like permission to access your cameras as a part of its public safety and crime fighting activities. You can contact Dan Newland at **(619) 531-2926** for information on how to partner with the SDPD in this program.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A ROBBERY TO HELP ARREST THE ROBBER

- Call **911** immediately after the robber leaves and follow all instructions from the dispatcher, e.g., to keep the phone line open until officers arrive. The dispatcher will probably ask for a description of the robber, his or her vehicle, and direction of escape. Be prepared to provide this information. It will be broadcast to the responding officers who may see and be able to stop the robber.
- Observe the direction of escape and the characteristics of any vehicle involved, i.e., its license, make, model, color, etc.
- Close the store. Lock all doors and stop store operations until officers arrive and conduct a preliminary investigation of the scene.
- Preserve the crime scene. Tell your employees not to touch anything the robber may have touched or otherwise contacted, and to keep away from areas where the robber had been.
- Ask all witnesses to remain until officers can interview them. Get their names and contact information if they are unable to remain. Ask to see their driver's licenses or other ID to verify this information.
- Write down everything you can remember about the robbery so you can provide the SDPD with a good description of what happened as well as descriptions of the robber(s), vehicle(s) involved, and weapon(s) used. Have each employee involved do the same. It is important that they do this independently, i.e., without discussing the robbery with other employees.
- Make a list of all drugs that were taken.
- Report the loss of drugs to U. S. Drug Enforcement Agency office in San Diego on DEA Form 106. The instructions for this form can be found at www.dea diversion.usdoj.gov/21cfr_reports/theft/index.html.
- Answer all questions of the responding officers and the robbery investigators. Have each employee involved remain in the store and do the same.
- Provide camera imagery to the SDPD. Any camera system that is installed should be designed to provide high-quality, digital imagery of the robbery.
- Offer a reward for the arrest and conviction of the robber and request that other pharmacies in your area post the notice.
- Analyze the robbery and take appropriate measure to prevent recurrence.

SDPD AREA STATIONS

Central	2501 Imperial Ave. SD 92102	(619) 744-9500
Eastern	9225 Aero Dr. SD 92123	(858) 495-7900
Mid-City	4310 Landis St. SD 92105	(619) 516-3000
Northeastern	13396 Salmon River Rd. SD 92129	(858) 538-8000
Northern	4275 Eastgate Mall SD 92037	(858) 552-1700
Northwestern	12592 El Camino Real SD 92130	(858) 523-7000
Southeastern	7222 Skyline Dr. SD 92114	(619) 527-3500
Southern	1120 27th St. SD 92154	(619) 424-0400
Western	5215 Gaines St. SD 92110	(619) 692-4800
